

Children's Social work and Family & Community Support in Aberdeen



'Brilliant free service - by far my little ones' favourite class. I took my child, now 4, to Peep as a baby and now take my second child and it's just brilliant, the babies love it.' Peep parent

'Peep is a very positive programme which focuses on people's strengths rather than their deficits and encourages them to enjoy their children.' Anne Donaldson, Lead Service Manager, Children's Services, Aberdeen City Council

The Peep Aberdeen Service is provided by Aberdeen City Council to deliver the Peep Learning Together Programme across the City. It began in 2003 when the City Council saw clearly how the Peep Learning Together Programme could support the families of children under five to improve the quality of the home learning environment and parent-child relationships.

Peep Aberdeen was funded until 2008 by Changing Children's Services as a way to enable multi-agency working to improve outcomes for families. It is now a mainstream service integrated into Family & Community Support and Children's Social Work. Partners included Health, Social work, Education and Third Sector. The Council have continued to invest in the work through an increase in staffing, growing capacity.

The Peep Aberdeen team provides universal Peep groups, focused Peep groups and individual support to approximately 150 families at any one time. The team also train practitioners and volunteers from a variety of settings to deliver the Peep Learning Together Programme and supports them to deliver high quality provision.

The following information was provided by the Peep Service Aberdeen. We would like to say thank you to them and express our admiration for all they do to improve the lives of children and families:

Early Intervention with care-experienced children and their parents/carers

Peep sits within Family & Community Support and Children's Social Work as it is recognised that the service can offer early intervention to families who may require some additional support for a short period of time and that this may prevent escalation to more intensive support. Peep can also support families back into their community as part of, or following social work intervention.

We work with our Contact Centre and have trained all of their staff to deliver the Peep Learning Together Programme. The Family Learning Worker delivers 1-1 family sessions, working in partnership with the Permanence and Care Teams. For families where children are looked after at home (a 'supervision order') the Family Learning Worker can work with the parent and child(ren) in their home.

We work in partnership with Richmondhill House. Richmondhill House is a child-centred, residential service which provides an assessment of parenting ability, capacity and risk where improving outcomes for children is the main focus. Parents are offered a supportive and nurturing environment in which they can build their knowledge in relation to childcare skills and child development

Richmondhill House run a Peep group in the community. Residents of their service are encouraged and supported to attend during their time in the house and also once they have returned home. This can support integration back into their community and provides continuity of support.

Some parents attend Peep with their children during their unsupervised contact sessions. This is usually organised in partnership with the Contact Centre staff or other Social Work contacts.

The Peep Progression Pathway

The Peep Learning Together Programme has integrated early child development units at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5 (English equivalent Entry level 3, level 1 and level 2). These integrated units are called the Peep Progression Pathway.

'This has been a good learning experience for me. Although I have been fostering for a long time and doing all the encouraging, communication and singing etc. but have not really recognised how much the children benefit.' Foster carer

Several parents whose children are looked after have completed a Peep Progression Pathway portfolio and gained a qualification. This has boosted their confidence and made them more aware of how they are supporting their child's learning.

The Peep Progression Pathway now forms part of foster carers required annual training and development. Each foster carer completes a Peep Progression Pathway portfolio at SCQF level 5. Kinship carers and parents who have adopted their children are also offered the opportunity to complete a Peep Progression Pathway unit.

Peep supporting families to stay together

Jill Mennie, the outgoing Peep Coordinator for Aberdeen shared this case study:

'A mother joined our antenatal Peep group. She had lost the care of her first child and was pregnant with her second. She realised she wanted to make changes when pregnant with her second child and Peep provided that window of opportunity. This mum stayed with Peep until her child was 3 years old – allowing her to move through Antenatal, Baby, Toddler and Pre-school Peep. She then became a trained Peep volunteer, completed the Peep Learning Together Programme Training and the associated City and Guilds qualification. She progressed to becoming a crèche worker, completing a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) 2 in Childcare and is currently completing a further qualification at SVQ 3. She has care of her second child and has built a good relationship with her first.'

Peep for 'vulnerable twos'

We have trained and supported 'Me2's' – the new vulnerable two's service in Aberdeen. This service is for the families of two-year-olds who are entitled to 600 hours per year of free childcare. Me2 staff have been trained by Peep Aberdeen to offer Peep groups and the Peep Progression Pathway. Groups are now offered in four areas. The service is developing a rolling programme which will offer parents the opportunity to complete one unit per term if they wish. One parent has just completed her second unit and has had the confidence to progress to a higher level. Others have said they would like to continue on to a second unit.

Targeted groups

'I'm so glad my Health Visitor introduced me to this group and it came just at the right time. I think if it had come much later I might have needed to accept medical help and even though I'm still not feeling myself I'm certainly on the right road.' Peep parent, Low Mood Group

Focused groups are developed and run by our Family Resource Workers, often in partnership with other teams. Current examples include Moving On from Domestic Abuse and Low Mood (postnatal depression). These groups focus on Peep activities to build confidence and positive attachment relationships between adult and child but also provide peer support enabling parents to develop their own support networks.

Examples of past initiatives include working with fathers in prison. This programme was developed in partnership with Craiginches Prison and supported positive transitions back into family life for children whose fathers were due for release following a custodial sentence. This programme was piloted but ended with the closure of the prison.

Partnership working

'The Peep Service Aberdeen has grown and grown as have valuable partnerships. An early partnership with the Workers Education Association (WEA) led to the creation of an adult learning qualification which formed the basis of the current Peep Progression Pathway. Partnership with the NHS led to the development of an antenatal programme for substance misusing parents which has influenced national development of antenatal work and training by Peep.

Other partners include the English as an Additional Language Service, North East Sensory Service, Park Rangers and community-based parent and toddler groups. The Peep team are working with the Family Nurse Partnership to identify young parents who would benefit from Peep provision.

We run a book club for the Peep groups and link this to Bookbug Library Challenge. We work closely with our local Bookbug Co-ordinator who regularly visits group to provide information and encourage library membership.

Universal service

'We offer 19 universal groups in partnership with other services and with volunteers. Our partners include the English as an Additional Language Service, North East Sensory Service, Park Rangers and community-based parent and toddler groups. A young parents group began in mid-2017 with referrals coming from the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP).

'It is great to have a group for young parents that we can feed into.' FNP nurse

Volunteer development

'Thank you for giving me this opportunity with Peep. I truly enjoyed delivering my group and I don't think that would've been possible without your amazing training and everyone's vote of confidence. As a family we have been with Peep for two years and we really enjoy it.' Parent volunteer

We have developed a support package for recruiting, training and supporting volunteers. This provides a potential progression route into education or employment. We currently have 11 volunteers, 6 of whom are

former Peep parents. All have completed Peep Learning Together Programme training and some have achieved City & Guilds accreditation and are now delivering Peep groups.

Recognising adult learning: the Peep Progression Pathway

We are working to embed the Peep Progression Pathway across our programme and we are using improvement methodology to identify the most effective ways to do this. Our aim was that 80% of participating parent/carers would report increased confidence in parenting skills & knowledge of child development by June 2017. We achieved this aim but would like to increase the number of participants. To date we have had 59 parents and carers achieve a qualification.

We have a progression agreement in place with North East College to allow Peep parents/carers to move from our informal, community provision to part and full time college courses. A number of parents and carers are choosing to complete more than one unit and we have had enquiries about college courses. Some parents are thinking about new careers and some of our volunteers have gained paid employment.

The resource library

Initial funding allowed us to develop resources for delivery and we have continued to maintain and build on this. Our resources include books, play packs and an assortment of facilitation materials. These are available to all practitioners for Peep work and also other work with families. Books and play packs are also lent to families to extend learning in the home.

Peep Aberdeen Team

Project Co-ordinator – manages the team and development of the service. Delivery Centre Internal Quality Assurance officer for the Peep Progression Pathway

Family Resource Workers – remit for Peep group work delivery, including delivering and assessing the Peep Progression Pathway. They lead on supporting practitioners and volunteers across Aberdeen City and on the development of focused groups

Family Learning Worker - remit for Looked After Children (LAC) aged between 1-3 years to support play and learning. This support is offered to parents and carers or to professionals working with the families. This can be on an individual basis or in group work. The post holder also provides training input on attachment and play for prospective adopters, foster carers and kinship carers.

Support Worker – provides administrative support to the team

